



## **News Release**

**For Immediate Release:**

June 11, 2004

**Contact:**

Anna West

Health Access Communication Officer

(801) 538-6847

### **Utah's Overall Uninsured Rate Shows Little Change Despite Tough Economic Times**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) 2003 Health Status Survey shows little change in the percent of Utahns who lacked health insurance coverage since the survey was conducted in 2001. In 2001, 8.7 percent of Utahns were uninsured (margin of error + or – 0.8%), and in 2003, 9.1 percent were uninsured (margin of error + or – 1.2%). The overlapping margins of error around these two numbers make it difficult to conclude that the small increase since 2001, representing an estimate of 15,500 people statewide, indicates a real change in the percentage of uninsured Utahns.\*

While the overall number of uninsured changed little, reasons for being uninsured were different. Utahns were more likely to say they didn't have health insurance due to factors related to economic conditions. In 2003, more Utahns said they were uninsured because:

- They lost their job or changed employers (47.5 percent in 2003 compared with 29.5 percent in 2001)
- They were ineligible for insurance due to working part-time or temporary jobs (17.5 percent in 2003 compared with 14.6 percent in 2001)
- They could not afford insurance (66.3 percent in 2003 compared with 52.1 percent in 2001)

Fewer Utahns said they were uninsured:

- For one year or longer (55.1 percent in 2003 compared with 66.9 percent in 2001)
- Due to employer not offering health insurance (29.0 percent in 2003 compared with 33.1 percent in 2001)
- Because they thought it was safe to go without health insurance (16.6 percent in 2003 compared with 21.5 percent)

The uninsured rate decreased for adults who may be eligible for the Primary Care Network (PCN), a program to cover uninsured adults that began in 2002. In 2001, 34.2 percent of adults age 19-64 who may qualify for PCN by income were uninsured. In 2003, 32.9 percent of Utahns were uninsured in the same age and income group. (Information about PCN and other UDOH programs is provided on the attached fact sheet.)

**-MORE-**

## **Page 2 of 2 – Utah’s Overall Uninsured Rate Shows Little Change Despite Tough Economic Times**

“While the uninsured rate for adults who qualify for PCN declined by more than one percentage point, the number of Utah children from families who may qualify for CHIP continues to outpace our program capacity,” says Scott Williams, M.D., Executive Director, UDOH.

Among all Utah children, birth through age 18, the uninsured rate increased by a fraction, from 7.0 percent in 2001 to 7.2 percent in 2003. There was an increase in the uninsured rate for children from families with incomes that may qualify them for Utah’s Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), a program to cover Utah kids that began in 1998 and reached capacity in 2002. In 2001, 11.9 percent of children in the CHIP income range were uninsured, while in 2003, this increased to 14.3 percent.

Utahns who have coverage get it through a variety of sources. According to the UDOH 2003 Health Status Survey, about 70.8 percent of insured Utahns were covered through work. Another 9.6 percent of insured Utahns purchased private health insurance. About 8.2 percent of insured Utahns said CHIP, PCN, or Medicaid covered them. Prior to the recent open enrollment sessions for CHIP and PCN in May, the UDOH was covering about 209,000 Utahns through CHIP, PCN, Medicaid, and Covered at Work. In addition, the UDOH has many programs that help the uninsured access health services, including RxConnect Utah, the Utah Cancer Control Program, the Primary Care Grants Program, Baby Your Baby, clinics for children with special health care needs, and more. Community health clinics, charity care, and other safety net programs also provide essential health care services to the uninsured.

UDOH’s Office of Public Health Assessment will now be making new data from the Health Status Survey available every year. While the U.S. Current Population Survey also collects health insurance information, the UDOH’s Health Status Survey’s methodology provides a more accurate measure for Utah. Visit [ibis.health.utah.gov](http://ibis.health.utah.gov) to view data and reports from the UDOH Health Status Survey.

**\*Margin of error estimates will be provided for other statistics in this report upon request.**

###

*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*